

Ismene: piecing together a woman

Written By: Rainah Gregory

*Devised By: Alena Mackay-Smith,
Alexa Moore, Chloe Rogers, Rainah Gregory*



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This project was produced through an Independent Study with
Dave Dalton

Special thanks Javier Perez (House Manager) and Lily Franks (Usher)

Entrance Music by Michael Levy
[Spotify](#)

SCENES

Fantasy.....All

Grief.....Chloe

Confrontation.....All

Lullaby.....Rainah et. all

Longevity.....Alexa

Generations.....Alena

Reverence.....Chloe, Rainah, et. all

There will be a talk back following the performance

CAST

ISMENE



Alena Mackay-Smith (she/her) is a fourth-year English and Japanese Language & Literature double major, and Vice President of AJAR Improv Comedy Club at UVA. Acting credits include: *Hamlet* (Shakespeare on the Lawn '22).



Alexa Moore (she/her) is a fourth-year Drama and Foreign Affairs Major. During her time at UVA, she has spent the majority of her days in the drama building (even getting her own “office,” AKA the lobby, according to Cady Garey). She has worked on several shows in the department behind-the-scenes and has also worked on the Virginia Film Festival. Acting credits include: *This is Not a Date* by Tanaka Muvavarirwa (UVA New Works Festival '22), *Blessing on Your Head* by Karen Zipor (Overcranked Film Festival '22), *JAB* (VAFF Adrenaline Film Project '21), *In an East German Living Room* by Doug Grissom (UVA Drama), *Play in a Day* (Virginia Players '19), *Lighting the Way* Lab Series (Virginia Players '19).



Chloe Rogers (she/her) is a third-year Drama Major. Acting credits include: *In the Heights* (Live Arts 2020), *She Echoes on the Vine* (Jefferson Heritage Center 2021), *Boys: The Musical* (New Works Festival 2021), *Bake For Life* (New Works Festival 2022), and *Main Character* (Overcranked 2022). She has also been a stage manager for *The Black Monologues* (2022). She has been a Semi-Finalist for the KCACTF Musical Theater section in 2022 and has been awarded a Scholarship to study at the Open Jar Studios this upcoming summer.

ANTIGONE



Rainah Gregory (she/her) is a fourth-year Drama Major, American Sign Language & Deaf Culture Minor, President of Miller Arts Scholars, and President of the UVA Jazz Singers. Before attending UVA she completed the Integrated Program at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in New York ('17). She was named the National SDC Directing Fellow during the National Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) in Spring '21. She was later accepted into and completed a two-week directing intensive through Yale Summer Session during the summer of '21. She is a proud associate member of the Society of Directors and Choreographers (SDC). Writing credits include: *Princess Poppy's Perfect Husband* (Virginia Players Play in a Day '22) *Bake for Life* (UVA New Works Festival '22 and KCACTF Ten Minute Play Festival '22), *FUNeral* (UVA New Works Festival '21), and

So I Guess We're Doing This (UVA Overcranked Short Film*). Directing credits include: *Main Character* (asst. dir./choreo. UVA Overcranked Short Film), *Bake for Life* (co-dir./writ. UVA New Works Festival '22), *Peace by Piece* (dir. Virginia Players Lab Series '21), *So I Guess We're Doing This**, *Love and Information* (dir./act. of six scenes UVA Drama '20), and *Watch Me* by Caky Winsett (dir. Virginia Players Lab Series '20). Acting credits include: *The Dead Should Stay Dead* (Audioplay by Carolyn Schaumburg), *Love and Information* (UVA Drama), *Door Knock* (UVA New Works Festival '20). [Website](#) | [Instagram](#)

WRITER/DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Hello and welcome to *Ismene: piecing together a woman*. This project originated from a workshop I attended during the national portion of the 2021 Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival where we explored the story of *Antigone* and what our Brechtian fables would be. Mine was thus:

After losing her parents and both brothers, Ismene is tired. She has lost almost her entire family. Her sister, Antigone, insists that both brothers be buried the same way (after Creon denies Polynices' burial). Ismene fears that she will lose her sister too. Exhausted, she fights for her sister to stay alive beside her. When Antigone puts up a fight, Ismene must fight to die with her if Antigone wants to risk her life. Antigone rejects Ismene and Ismene is forced to watch as her sister is sentenced to death. When there is hope that Antigone may be released, her body is found and Ismene is left to grieve alone.

I had read *Antigone* several times and never really paid much attention to Ismene until this past year. I found myself wondering, at the end of the play, does Ismene bury Antigone? If so, how? Sophocles takes Ismene out of the picture halfway through the play and she never comes back. Why? The more I thought about this, the more I wanted to know who Ismene was and who she could be.

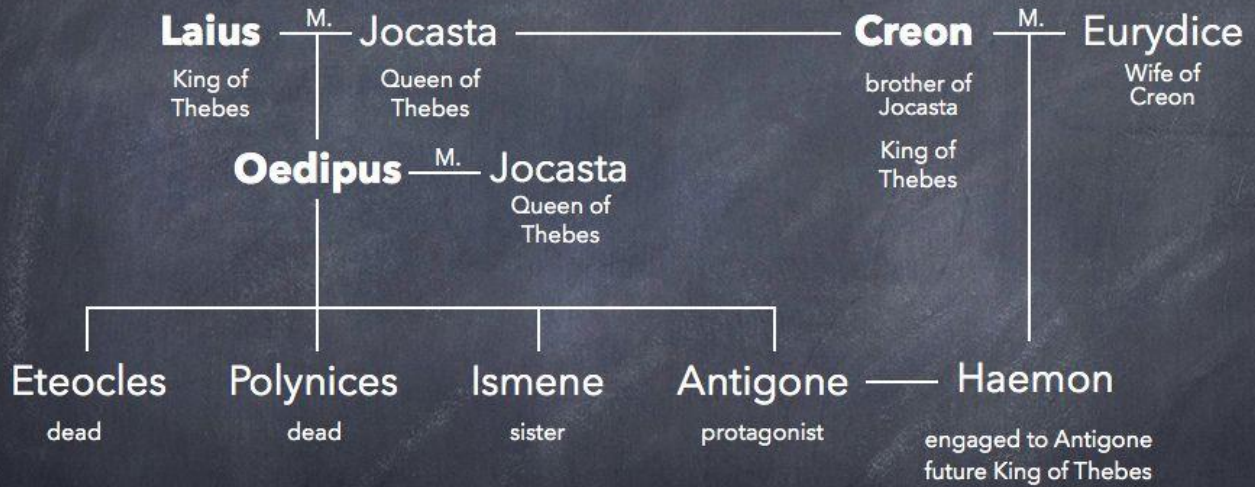
I've been meeting Dave Dalton this semester as part of an independent study. In our discussions, Dave and I have explored "feminine" vs "masculine" storytelling amongst other things. The Aristotelian model of drama is often seen as the "masculine" form: stasis, inciting incident, rising action, climax, and falling action. The "feminine" model is often described as more "circular." Dave mentioned a play to me called *a feminine ending* by Sarah Treem. Upon reading this play I saw discussions of gendered language, sentences, and "feminine" vs "masculine" endings in music. It got me thinking, did Antigone get a "masculine" story and a "masculine" ending? I wanted to give Ismene a "feminine" story and a "feminine" ending.

Tha actors and I began our process by reading both Ann Carson's translation of *Antigone* and Sarah Treem's, *a feminine ending*. With journals that I purchased for each person, we reflected on the two plays as well as other prompts that I provided. The first few rehearsals were very discussion heavy as we explored the plays, their relation to each other, and personal parallels and connections. The next part of the process that we agreed upon was that I would write the script based off of our discussions and journaling and together we would direct and edit the script in rehearsal. We had group rehearsals on weekends and a week with one on one rehearsals where we worked on monologues that I had written for each Ismene based off of something that each actor wanted to explore. We've made live edits in the rehearsal room, and have had things not make it into the final presentation.

I wanted us to explore what being an Ismene is. Perhaps we have all been Ismenes in our lives. We've regretted things, we've felt the pressures of the expectations of women in society, and have had a fear of being left behind. The goal was to produce a piece where we could explore this. It evolved over time and became an exploration of the relationship between Ismene and Antigone and, perhaps more importantly, the relationship Ismene has with herself.

CONTEXT

THE FAMILY TREE



Oedipus Rex

King Laius and Queen Jocasta of Thebes are told by an oracle that their son, Oedipus, is doomed to kill his father and marry his mother. In the hopes of preventing this, Jocasta abandons her son to be found and raised elsewhere. Oedipus, in search of the truth as he grows up, learns from an Oracle of his fate. Believing that he was raised by his biological parents, he flees. On his way to Thebes he ends up killing his father Laius without knowing who he is and eventually marrying his mother Jocasta when in Thebes. After a plague takes hold of Thebes, Oedipus promises to find the man who murdered the king. Through his quest he learns that it was in fact himself who killed the king, his father, and married his mother. At the news that the prophecy was fulfilled, Jocasta takes her own life, and Oedipus blinds himself. Oedipus laments that his daughters, Antigone and Ismene be brought into a cursed family.

Oedipus at Colonus

Oedipus is characterized as a blind beggar, banished from Thebes, led by his daughter and guide, Antigone. As they travel they reach sacred ground near Athens that will provide Oedipus' burial place with a blessing. Ismene travels from Thebes to tell Oedipus and Antigone that Creon and Eteocles want Oedipus to return to Thebes to secure a blessing on the land. Oedipus refuses and instead promises his blessing to the King of Athens if he is allowed to be buried at Colonus. The king agrees, leading Creon to threaten war and to hold Antigone and Ismene hostage. The Athenian king saves the daughters and drives Creon away for the time being. Polynices, Oedipus' other son, arrives and asks for his support in trying to regain the Theban throne. Angry at this, Oedipus curses him prophesying that the brothers will kill each other. At the sound of thunder, Oedipus declares his death and leads the Athenian king, Antigone, and Ismene to prepare for his death. The daughters do not witness his death. After his death, Athens is secured with a blessing, Thebes a curse, and Antigone and Ismene return to Thebes.

Antigone

After the civil war in Thebes, Polynices and Eteocles are killed by each other's hand. Creon declares that Eteocles be granted a hero's burial while Polynices be left to rot. He threatens anyone who attempts to bury Polynices to be publicly stoned to death. Upon hearing the decree, Antigone confides in her sister that she will bury their brother, Ismene pushes against this. Creon discovers that Antigone has attempted to bury Polynices and brings her in for questioning along with Ismene. Ismene claims that she too buried Polynices leading to Antigone sharing the truth and rejecting her sister. Ismene leaves. Creon's son, Haemon, who is engaged to Antigone, stands up to his father without success. Creon decides to shut Antigone in a stone tomb and leave her to die instead of publicly stoning her. A blind oracle warns Creon that the gods disapprove of his actions and tells him that if he does not fix his mess, Haemon will die. Creon curses the oracle and has a change of heart which comes too late. Haemon takes his life outside of Antigone's tomb, Creon's wife takes her own life at the heartbreak of losing her son, and when the tomb is opened it is revealed that Antigone took her own life instead of waiting to die of starvation. Creon prays for a quick death.